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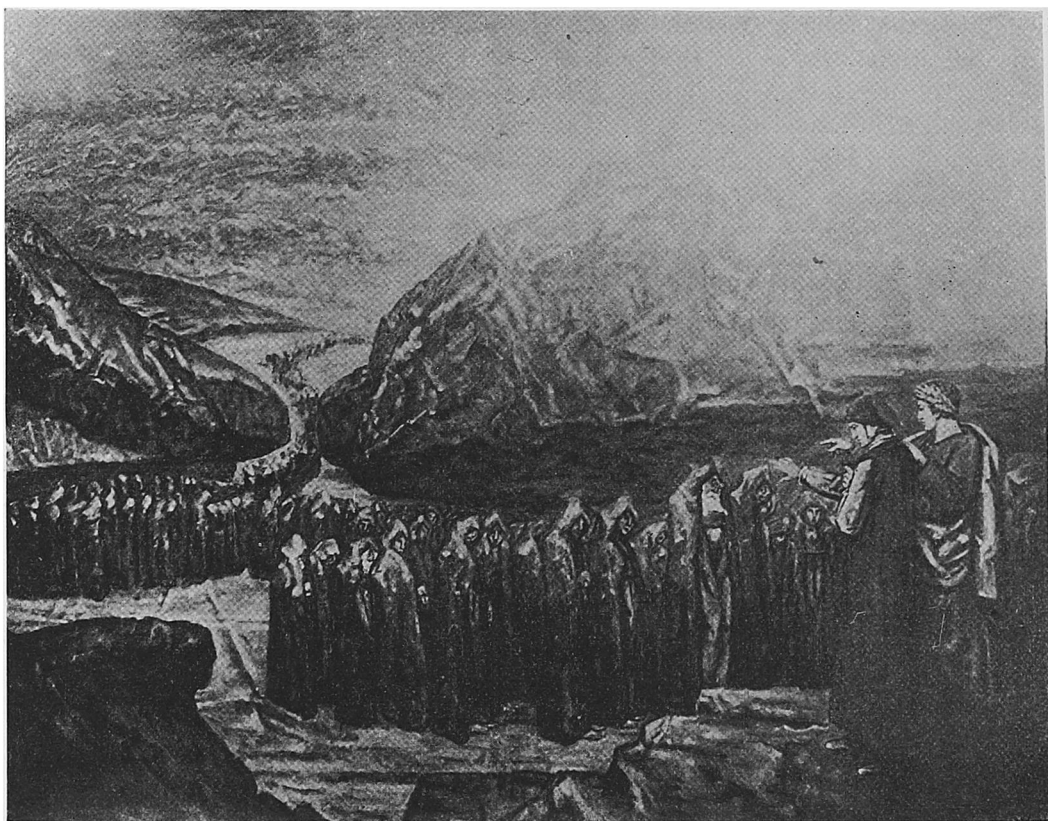
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Count le Marcis



*'THE SLOW PROCESSION OF THE HYPOCRITES
FROM DANTE'S 'INFERNO'
BY THE COUNT LE MARCIS*

laboured for the greater part of his life at this work, and always in the completest secrecy. The canvases were seen by no one until a year or two either shortly before, or shortly after his death, I forget which. The interest which the collection arouses is, however, far from being that of mere curiosity. It must at once be said that many of the canvases, not to say the greater number, are hopeless failures and barbarously rude, and that in all there is a naïve unskilfulness of technique. Yet some of these huge, awkwardly drawn and brutally painted canvases show that the author was a true artist. In one or two, I do not think it is too much to say, there is the saving touch of genius. It will be sufficient to describe one of the canvases—I do not affirm it to be the best—that illustrating 'The slow procession of the Hypocrites dragging their copes of gilded lead.' The procession drags its way down a grey valley. The slopes on each side and the sky above are of the same leaden hue. But the train of the Hypocrites is a long winding line of burnished,

reddish gold. They pass before Dante and Virgil standing to the right. The figures of the poets are insignificant. But the effect achieved by the tones, in which the cortege with its gilded copes is painted, is extraordinary. The impression strikes the visitor immediately on entering the room where the picture is hung, the hopeless weariness of the slowly toiling procession, and at the same time, the deadly false glitter of the gilded lead in the oppressive valley, whence every breath of freshness, every spark of spirit has been banished. The picture shows at its highest the power of the true artist's touch to create a penetrating and strong impression merely by an effect of colour.

NOTES FROM BIRMINGHAM

THE Society of Artists has just reopened with its Seventy-fifth Autumn Exhibition, and the committee has succeeded in

Birmingham

putting before the public a varied and attractive collection of pictures.

The level of artistic attainment in local circles certainly grows higher from year to year, or else the committee's creditably rigorous selection is having a speedy and beneficial effect.

As usual, most of the important pictures, apart from the work of Birmingham artists, have already been seen and noted in London, and even some of our own men contribute canvases that have seen the light in this year's Academy. To this category belongs Sidney Meteyard's 'Hope comforting Love in Bondage,' an interesting work reminiscent of though not plagiarising the style of Burne-Jones.

The early Tuscan art which proved such a source of inspiration to that master, is responsible for some richly decorative and curious little paintings by Arthur J. Gaskin, Joseph Southall, Bernard Sleight, and other devotees. It is impossible for a thinking person to join in the cheap sneer with which these works are all too

frequently greeted in Birmingham. At the same time there is some excuse for the charge of wilful eccentricity brought against Mr. Gaskin, but this should always be coupled with sincere admiration for his exquisite handling and his undeniably painstaking spirit.

This artist has mastered technique to an extent that may well render him indifferent to popular criticism — but the self-conscious limitations imposed in the rendering of his figure of 'Psyche,' and the figures and trees in 'The Twelve Brothers' (Grimm), cannot fail to be rather trying even to enthusiasts. If Mr. Gaskin would cast aside these hampering conventions, and put forth his full knowledge and power, he would much enhance his rather eccentric reputation as an artist capable of greatness.

'A Valley in Eden,' by Charles H. Gere, is delightfully restrained and harmonious; it represents a beautiful nude girl standing by a little stream of a tender blue colour, two rabbits are squatting tranquilly near her, and further on



*'CHIRON'
FROM DANTE'S 'INFERNO'
BY THE COUNT LE MARCIS*

Amico di Sandro

is a fawn—there is quite an indescribable charm in the tones of this little idyll. His other contribution called 'Infant Joy,' is equally fascinating. Blake's poem of the same title, 'I happy am—Joy is my name,' in the 'Songs of Innocence,' is probably the source of inspiration. A chubby child naked, save for a single white garment, is careering wildly along in an attitude instinct with life and happiness, while a peaceful looking shepherd and a flock of sheep form a suggestive and pleasing background.

Miss Margaret Gere is rapidly following in her brother's footsteps, her fresh coloured 'Portrait' on vellum is rendered with dainty care and decision. Mr. J. V. Jelley is by no means adequately represented; he sends two comparatively unimportant though very perfect flower paintings. Edward S. Harper on the other hand contributed four very fine portraits, the most attractive called 'An English Lassie,' is a very pure and artistic presentment of a young girl in white seated against the fanciful tapestry background that one has learned to associate with Mr. Harper's work. There is much humour in W. J. Wainwright's 'Begone dull care,' which depicts a rollicking fellow playing a mandolin, with his foot on the rocker of a cradle, while a woman behind is jesting with him. The subject is painted with immense skill.

Miss Edith Holden is making very rapid progress. 'In the Perthshire Highlands' is a clever painting of shaggy Highland cattle, the foreground of purple heather, and the characteristic brilliant yet soft blue of the landscape in the distance unite to form a beautiful whole. Walter Langley is an artist of whom Birmingham is justly proud—he has surpassed even his unusually high standard in 'Wandering Musicians;' the treatment is broadly sympathetic, and the figures are characteristically sad and more dignified than usual, inasmuch as they are marred by no touch of commonplace sentiment. There is something of the spirit of Walker in this picture. Claude Pratt has sent among other things a vivid little genre subject, called 'How the gossip grew.' Three comfortable old bodies are shown discussing scandal with the acrid satisfaction of cottage (or even palace) dames, when some particularly juicy tit-bit crops up.

The colouring is bright and satisfactory. Arthur C. Shorthead has scored a distinct success in 'Startled' (W. T. Webber Esq.'s pugs). Animal painting is, we believe, a departure for this artist, and it is undoubtedly his forte. Colonel Burt has never excelled his admirable landscape 'From Dolgiog : Machynlleth.' We hope at some future time to give more detailed descriptions and reproductions of this devoted painter's work. We must leave also to a future occasion some account of the doings of Messrs. S. H. Baker, Oliver Baker and other important local artists.

Recent Publications

BOTTICELLI'S FRIEND BY BERNHARD BERENSON

MR. BERNHARD BERENSON'S latest contribution to the history of Italian Art * has robbed our National Gallery of two of Filippino Lippi's works, but it has presented the world with another great master about whom so little has been known hitherto, that his very name is a matter for conjecture. And Filippino is not the only great Florentine whose memory is made to suffer through this belated act of justice: Botticelli fares even worse, and Fra Filippo and Ghirlandajo have to contribute their share towards the reconstruction of 'Amico di Sandro's' personality.

'Amico di Sandro' (friend of Botticelli) is the name given by Mr. Berenson to a Florentine painter, whom he proves to have lived in the second half of the fifteenth century, and worked between 1475 and 1485. On the hand of admirably logical reasoning the writer compiles a whole list of works, attributed to other better known artists, which he proves to emanate from the same source—from the brush of 'Amico.' The result of his deductions from these works is the reconstruction of the new master's personality. He started as a close follower and imitator of Botticelli, but made rapid progress in a career which must have been prematurely cut short by death at an early age. His influence can be traced in the works of Filippino Lippi whom

* The Study and Criticism of Italian Art by Bernhard Berenson (London: George Bell & Sons, 1901).